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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA AND NEA-I

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [JO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: DESPITE CONCERNS, SENIOR OFFICIALS TELL AMBASSADOR
CROCKER JORDAN WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT USG IN IRAQ

REF: A. A) AMMAN 4369

[1](#)B. B) AMMAN 3752

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. In a series of meetings with senior Jordanian government officials on October 28, Ambassador Crocker noted that the surge had been successful, stressed that opportunities remain to constrain Iran, and emphasized the importance and potential impact of an Arab diplomatic presence in Iraq. He reasserted the U.S. commitment to a stable, democratic Iraq, and encouraged Jordan to focus on the Iraqi government as a whole and not individual personalities. GOJ counterparts echoed King Abdullah's points about the importance of the Iraq issue to Jordan, expressed concerns about Iran and Iraqi PM Maliki, and reaffirmed Jordan's steadfast support for U.S. goals and initiatives in the region while seeking enhanced, bilateral strategic coordination. Jordanian interlocutors also expressed the need for financial assistance to mitigate the strains which the Iraqi refugee presence places on Jordan. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, accompanied by the Ambassador, called on King Abdullah (Ref A), and separately on Foreign Minister Abdelelah al-Khatib; Lt. General Mohammad al-Dahabi, Director of the General Intelligence Directorate (GID); and Dr. Bassem Awadallah, Director of the King's Office, on October 28. Ambassador Crocker also participated in a candid roundtable discussion with other influential members of Jordan's elite.

[1](#)3. (C) After thanking Jordan for its continuing support, Ambassador Crocker outlined to receptive Jordanian interlocutors his views on the current situation in Iraq. As in his meeting with the King (ref A), Ambassador Crocker remarked that while Iraq is far from perfect and success could not be guaranteed, there are encouraging developments:

- The U.S. surge has worked -- there has been a drop in violence, and while sectarianism is still present, sectarian violence is down significantly;

- Many Iraqis who previously supported al-Qaida, such as those living in Anbar province, have now turned against al-Qaida and are assisting Coalition forces;

- The Iranian Embassy in Baghdad is active. There still are no active Arab embassies in Baghdad and now is the time that Arabs, as a whole, should show more solidarity with the Iraqis.

- Regardless of who wins the 2008 U.S. presidential election,

the U.S. will remain committed to Iraq. The USG has to deal with the situation in Iraq based on facts.

Jordan Supports U.S., but Wants More Strategic Dialogue

14. (S) FM Khatib said he was very impressed with the Congressional testimony of Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, which he felt shifted the nature of the debate. He asserted that Jordan remained with the United States, saying, "If you succeed, we succeed," and noted that regionalism, tribalism, and extremism work to everyone's detriment. Khatib hoped for frank discussion at the important upcoming Istanbul neighbors, conference, but feared that the Turkish-Kurd issue could overshadow the meeting. Khatib said the most important issues in Iraq were its unity, which needed a strong, sovereign government, and the avoidance of interference by others - particularly Iran - noting there was much doubt in the region of the ability of Iraq to resist the influence of Iran. He said the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad would be reopening soon.

15. (S) Dr. Bassem Awadallah, the King's Office Director, repeated that Jordan has been, and will remain, a steadfast supporter of U.S. initiatives. He stated that what Jordan needs from the U.S. is a better idea of the strategic plan, i.e., what is the goal beyond stability and a regional dialogue. While the situation is certainly better than a year ago, Awadallah said it still has the potential for great difficulties, and if an all-out Iraqi civil war were to erupt, the neighbors -) Turkey and Syria as well as Iran -) would have strong reasons to become involved. Under those circumstances the Saudis would be unlikely to sit idly by, and this would all place Jordan in a very difficult situation.

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Continuing Concerns About Iran

16. (C) In a late afternoon roundtable discussion with leading Jordanian opinion-makers -- including Senator and former PM Taher al-Masri, Senator and former PM Fayez Tarawneh, former Minister of Transport and current Royal Jordanian Chairman Nasser al-Lozi, Central Bank Governor Omayya Toukan, and former Ambassador to the U.S. Karim Kavar -- several of the attendees noted that Iran's influence is increasing not only in Iraq, but in Syria, Lebanon, and throughout the region. They recognized there are costs to letting Iran pursue this policy, but there are also costs inherent in trying to stop it. Kavar saw Iran's use of proxies in the region as part of a bargaining strategy, in which it pulls the strings in the region as its relations with the outside world dictate. Tarawneh lamented the fact that Hezbollah was being allowed to rebuild in southern Lebanon, increasing the complexity of the region's relations with Israel and putting a solution to the Palestinian situation further from reach.

17. (C) Sharing Jordanian concerns about Iran's influence, Ambassador Crocker indicated that the Iranian Ambassador resides in Baghdad, and is very active in supporting extremist elements. However, the Arab identity shared by Sunni and Shiite Iraqis could very well prevent Iran from gaining too solid a foot-hold. Iraqis fought a major war with Iran, and Maliki lived in Iran only briefly and never bothered to learn Farsi. Furthermore, the Iranians had recently overreached with their JAM proxies in Karbala. While Iran has the power to create instability and block the solutions of others through its proxies, it does not have the power to create solutions of its own.

18. (C) All participants expressed concern about Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the possibility of an American military strike. Ambassador Crocker responded that the recently announced sanctions on Iran were designed to

encourage a diplomatic solution and avoid a military conflict. More political pressure on Iran is the best way to reach a non-military solution, as evidenced by recent cracks in the political leadership. The goal is a change in Iranian behavior, especially by drying up support among Iraq's Shiites for Iranian meddling.

Wide Dissatisfaction with al-Maliki

¶9. (S/NF) Dr. Awadallah said that Jordanians have a basic lack of confidence in Iraqi PM Maliki, but would continue to work with him as they had no other choice. Separately, GID Chief Dahabi repeated that Jordan does not like al-Maliki, but the GOJ is committed to supporting U.S. policies and absolutely would not work against the Iraqi PM. COMMENT: In contrast to and more significant than Dahabi's take on Maliki, the King and PM Maliki have established good personal rapport during Maliki's visits to Jordan. END COMMENT.

¶10. (C/NF) Acknowledging these concerns, Ambassador Crocker commented that the Iraqis now have a federal system, but are still working out what "federal" means. Maliki knows he needs to keep the country together, and has been working toward better cooperation with the provinces, recently providing supplemental funding and support worth \$70 million, as well as funding for 25,000 police officers in Anbar province. Ambassador Crocker stated the focus should be on the Iraqi government as a whole, rather than the current personality line-up. As in all democracies, a prime minister in Iraq is not a permanent figure.

Jordanian Support for Iraq and U.S. Initiatives

¶11. (S/NF) In outlining GID activities regarding Iraq, particularly in Anbar province, Dahabi repeatedly stressed that everything GID did was in close cooperation with USG agencies in Amman and Baghdad. Commenting on relations with other countries, however, Dahabi opined that Egypt was too far away to play a significant role in Iraqi matters. To keep Syrian and Iranian influence in Iraq under control, the key was the leadership of Saudi Arabia. Once the Saudis were on board, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) would follow.

¶12. (C) A member of Dahabi's staff commented that Jordan is in dire need of financial assistance. Resource-challenged, Jordan has nevertheless accepted almost 700,000 Iraqi

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"guests" and is providing them subsidized food and health care, plus no-cost education. NOTE: The number of Iraqis in Jordan remains open to dispute, and most serious estimates place it much lower. END NOTE. The staff member continued that as food and real estate prices climb and the labor market is distorted, the Iraqi presence is increasingly becoming a hardship for Jordan. However, Jordan will continue its policies -- temporarily -- to assist the Iraqis until such time as they can return home. GID noted that Iraq itself has promised financial assistance in order to aid Iraqi citizens in Jordan, but that financial assistance has thus far not been provided.

¶13. (C) During the roundtable discussion, participants repeated that Jordan has been a leading force in support of Iraq's political leadership. Jordan receives a steady stream of high-level Iraqi visitors; is always the first to congratulate new Iraqi governments; and hosts Iraqi refugees. It has also paid a price for this support, with some noting that Jordan's former embassy in Baghdad was the first to be bombed. Jordan can only do so much, was the refrain; only Iraqis can fix Iraq.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Crocker has cleared this cable.
Hale